

Amazing Disney Cruise Line: Finding the Wonder & Magic At Sea

by Kim LaPaglia, PassPorter Guest Contributor

In [my last article](#), I just might have mentioned how I sang my favorite song -- *When You Wish Upon A Star* -- to my family after securing a coveted spot on the Inaugural Walt Disney World Moms Panel.

It's truly amazing the difference one year in your life can make. For me, that tune has really come to represent this New Year as well. Just as I was preparing to look for my next adventure, I was offered the opportunity to stay on the Moms Panel for an additional year in order to help guests smoothly sail through the stages of planning a cruise. Working with Disney Cruise Line, you can't help but hear "When You Wish Upon A Star" as you begin your voyage!

Recently, I embarked on a 7-night training cruise aboard the Disney Magic. This was a solo trip so that I could soak in all the magic of the Disney Cruise Line (DCL).

I'd like to share some of my fun and informative experiences, hosted by Disney Cruise Line's Public Relations Director, Jason Lasecki.

During my cruise, I was given the opportunity to meet with Officers and other crew members to discuss aspects of the Disney Cruise Line that I felt would be important to guests planning a cruise with DCL.

I chatted with the Hotel Director in his office. What a view! Mats Oskarsson confirmed that suite occupancy rates are very high and in fact there are usually waiting lists for suites before the new itineraries are even announced. Clearly, Disney Cruise Line is fulfilling dream vacations. Out of the passengers aboard our cruise, approximately one-half of them were repeat cruisers with DCL.

Next, we stopped at the office next door. There, I was introduced to Brent Davies, the Cruise Director. Impressively, DCL goes to "Infinity and Beyond" in order to provide guests with incredible entertainment. The popularity of the Pirates in the Caribbean Night is one example. Sometimes the Captain will try to position the vessel so the fireworks are able to be shown even in less desirable conditions.

Our next meet and greet took place in Sessions where we chatted with Jason Ward, the Shore Excursion Manager. DCL strives to create shore excursions that meet the expectations of their guests, thus guest feedback is taken very seriously. Popular excursions such as dolphin

experiences tend to sell out and it is recommended to book excursions in advance. When signing up for shore excursions, please note the age limits as they are for safety reasons. Choosing age-appropriate activities will allow the entire family to experience a memorable adventure.

The Youth Activities Manager chatted with us as well. After touring the clubs, I also stopped by Flounder's Reef Nursery. The staff is hired specifically to work in the nursery, where there is a 1:6 staff/toddler ratio and a 1:4 staff/infant ratio with a maximum of 30 children at a time. It's a quiet, serene place for the youngest of cruisers. Parents may book up to 10 hours of nursery time on line prior to their cruise. On the second day of sailing, once all passengers have been given a chance to secure times, parents can then inquire about booking more nursery sessions.

I was also treated to a private tour of the galley. Martin, the Executive Chef from England, was very kind in answering my questions. DCL guests enjoy "fresh to order" cuisine as only basic prep such as sauces and soups are made prior to orders being taken by the servers. Each restaurant has its own galley with a separate children's line near the front. This helps the servers bring the food out quickly to the children in the dining room! Best of all, new menus will be unveiled in March. You'll see some of your old favorites along with many new selections.

The Backstage Theater tour gave me a huge appreciation for the cast's ability to perform nightly on a stage at sea. As I stood near the Disney Dreams set, the ship was rocking and I worried about keeping my balance while standing still. Shows have only been canceled due to rough seas on rare occasions. It's more likely that a show night will be switched with a movie night to accommodate any safety concerns. The cast of 30 spends two months in Toronto training before they spend a two-week transition adapting to the ship's stage. During this transition, the old and new cast will work together. The old cast then departs and the new cast spends the next eight months entertaining DCL audiences.

Before departing for Castaway Cay, I was also given a tour of the Bridge. Captain Tom Forberg, from Norway, has been with Disney Cruise Line since the Magic's maiden voyage on July 30, 1998. How does he steer the ship into ports? With a computerized joystick, of course! Captain Forberg has helmed ships for 30 years, including his time as a navy officer. Captain Forberg states "I'm not a Viking any more," as he has become accustomed to and enjoys the warmer weather.

If you are in need of some sunshine and warm ocean breezes, go to disneycruise.com to order your free planning kit. While there, explore

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the itineraries. For me, the most difficult part of a cruise is deciding which itinerary to choose.

Sometimes it just eases your worries to ask a Mom who has "been there, done that." Thus, my new role on the Walt Disney World Moms Panel consists in not only answering Walt Disney World questions that are directed to me but also Disney Cruise Line questions.

After all, it's a bit intimidating to take your family aboard a ship for the first time. You know what to expect from a Walt Disney World resort. But you may have zillions of questions about what to anticipate aboard a Disney Cruise. And you may feel completely uncomfortable calling your travel agent again and again.

If so, you can submit all of your questions to me at <http://www.disneyworldmoms.com>. And, you do not even need to be a mom. At the Moms Panel, we answer questions from moms, dads, and solo travelers too. We are helping grandparents and young adults alike to make the most of their WDW and DCL vacations.

I can't wait to continue to share with you my personal experiences aboard the Disney Magic and the Disney Wonder. It'll be fun to answer your questions as well as to research the questions that even a Castaway Club Member (repeat DCL cruiser) may need to follow up on.

I have a passion for reading, writing, research and Disney. Let me help steer your family toward a magical vacation!

You can read a full report of Kim's DCL training cruise on her blog: <http://stopamoment.typepad.com/>

About The Author: Kimberly LaPaglia was selected as a member of the 2008 WDW Moms Panel. This year, she continues her role on the Panel helping guests with Disney Cruise Line questions and any Walt Disney World questions posed directly to her. Kim has stayed at nearly all of the WDW resorts and enjoys sailing with Mickey. As a Disney bride for her 10th anniversary vow renewal, her family rode in Cinderella's Coach to the Wedding Pavilion.

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